

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Action/Discussion Item:

704 KAR 3:340, Commonwealth Diploma Program (Final)

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

704 KAR 3:340; KRS 156.070; KRS 156:160

Action Question:

Should the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) give final approval to 704 KAR 3:340, Commonwealth Diploma Program?

History/Background:

Existing Policy. The current requirements for the Commonwealth Diploma are based on students completing at least 22 units of credit including the minimum graduation requirements, any additional courses specified by the local board of education, successful completion of the pre-college curriculum, at least four (4) Advanced Placement (AP) or four (4) International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with a grade of “C” or better, and completion of one (1) AP Examination in at least three (3) of the AP or IB content areas without regard to score.

A Call for Change. The KBE asked staff to review the current program and to propose revisions to the Commonwealth Diploma program to ensure that it is: 1) rigorous and performance-based, 2) includes opportunities for students to earn the Commonwealth Diploma through a broader range of course work directly aligned to the Individual Graduation Plan, and 3) credentials exceptional achievement. Because the Board is engaged in raising the rigor of the high school graduation requirements and introducing new measures of student accountability, it is an appropriate time to make adjustments in the Commonwealth Diploma program. Attached is the proposed revised administrative regulation. Appendix A provides a comparison of the current requirements and the proposed changes.

In October, the KBE reviewed proposed changes in the requirements for a student to earn a Commonwealth Diploma. The KBE asked for clarification or additional information related to:

- ❑ a required composite score of 26 on the ACT or 1100 on the SAT and
- ❑ the possibility of using student scores on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) as a requirement.

KDE staff researched other states’ policies that award “tiered” or “honors” diplomas to discern the requirements imposed. Staff found that in:

- ❑ **Ohio** - local districts can design honors diploma requirements and in some districts the requirement is simply that students take the ACT, SAT or the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test in order to earn the honors diploma. In other districts within the state of Ohio, a required composite of 27 on the ACT or a composite of 1210 on the SAT is required to earn the honors diploma.
- ❑ **Texas** - to earn a Distinguished Achievement Program diploma, the student has options for the assessment portion of the requirements. One option is that the student must receive a score on the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) that would qualify a student for recognition as a Commended Scholar or higher by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. A second option is that the student receives a passing score on one AP or IB exam.
- ❑ **Indiana** - student can earn a Core 40 Diploma with Academic Honors with one requirement being that the student completes one of the following:
 - Two Advanced Placement courses and corresponding AP exams
 - Dual credit courses resulting in 6 college credits
 - One AP course and corresponding exam resulting in three college credits
 - Score 1200 or higher combined on the SAT math and verbal
 - Score a 26 composite ACT
 - An International Baccalaureate Diploma
- ❑ **Indiana** - a student can earn a Core 40 Diploma with Technical Honors if the student completes the regular Core 40 graduation requirements, earns a “C” or above in required courses, has a grade point average of “B” or above, completes a career-technical program resulting in 8-10 credits, and the student earns a state-recognized certification or certificate of technical achievement in the career-technical program.

The Local Superintendents Advisory Council (LSAC), as part of their review of 704 KAR 3:340 as submitted to the KBE in October 2005, recommended the inclusion of KCCT scores as one criterion for award of the Commonwealth Diploma. Staff presented this recommendation to the Board and received agreement to explore that option as an item for consideration in December. The Offices of Teaching and Learning (OTL) and Assessment and Accountability (OAA) researched the option of using specific Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) scores as an additional criterion for the award of the Commonwealth Diploma. Based on guidance from the National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability (NTAPAA), the use of KCCT scores as one of several measures of academic distinction would be appropriate, but the exclusionary use of KCCT scores (not receiving certain scores would disqualify a student) should be avoided. OAA advises that the variability of opportunities the student has had for rigorous course work, challenging instructors, relevant learning experiences and additional instruction would impact the chances a student would have for receiving required scores. Also, in the past Kentucky has

not implemented the use of KCCT scores for student “high stakes” accountability, such as the decision for a measure of distinction for an individual student.

Suggestions from KDE staff about how to include KCCT scores as one criterion for earning the Commonwealth Diploma are as follows and are depicted in Appendix A:

- ❑ Use KCCT scores from the 10th and 11th grade
- ❑ Use KCCT scores from all assessed areas at the 10th and 11th grade (Reading (10th), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies
- ❑ Require minimum scores of Proficient in three of four areas (Reading assessed at the 10th grade and Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies at the 11th grade.)

The Office of Assessment and Accountability advises that the use of additional content areas is not appropriate at this time because they are not of sufficient length to use as criteria for high stakes decisions made at the individual student level.

Staff from the Office of Assessment and Accountability provided frequency counts for the number of students who scored proficient in all areas assessed at the 11th grade level in 2005. Eighteen percent of students assessed, or 7,312 students scored proficient or higher on all areas assessed at the 11th grade.

In 2004, the percentage of student that scored a composite score of 26 or higher on the ACT was 13.52%. The mean ACT scores for the students who scored Proficient or Distinguished on KCCT were:

- Reading: 23.86
- Math: 22.96
- Science 22.93

Staff Recommendation(s) and Rationale

Staff recommends the KBE give final approval to 704 KAR 3:340. The amendments provide greater flexibility for students to earn the diploma, specify performance standards for earning the diploma and maintain a rigorous course for students. The additional option for earning the Commonwealth Diploma to allow for a combination of two dual credit courses and two AP or IB courses (704 KAR 3:340 Section 3(4)) provides additional flexibility for individual student choice while maintaining rigor.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Proficiency in all content areas involves students taking rigorous courses, a level of student accountability and attainment of performance standards.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

- Instructional Support Network (October 12, 2005)-Comments were supportive in relation to added flexibility. Some members expressed concern about limiting the

- chance of students to earn the award based on one measure of assessment. The proposed changes have added flexibility in this area.
- Kentucky Association of Secondary School Principals (November 3)-Group was supportive of added flexibility as well as expanded opportunity in relation to AP/IB course areas.
 - Local Superintendents Advisory Council – The council’s input will be forwarded to the KBE via a letter from that body.

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